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White supremacist is guilty in Charlottesville parking garage beating of black man



Jacob Scott Goodwin, accused of beating a black man in a Charlottesville parking garage in Aug. 2017, was found guilty on May 2 of malicious wounding. (Reuters)

By [Ian Shapira](#)
May 2, 2018

CHARLOTTESVILLE — One of the white supremacists who viciously beat a black man inside a parking garage during last year’s “Unite the Right” rally here was found guilty Tuesday night of malicious wounding.

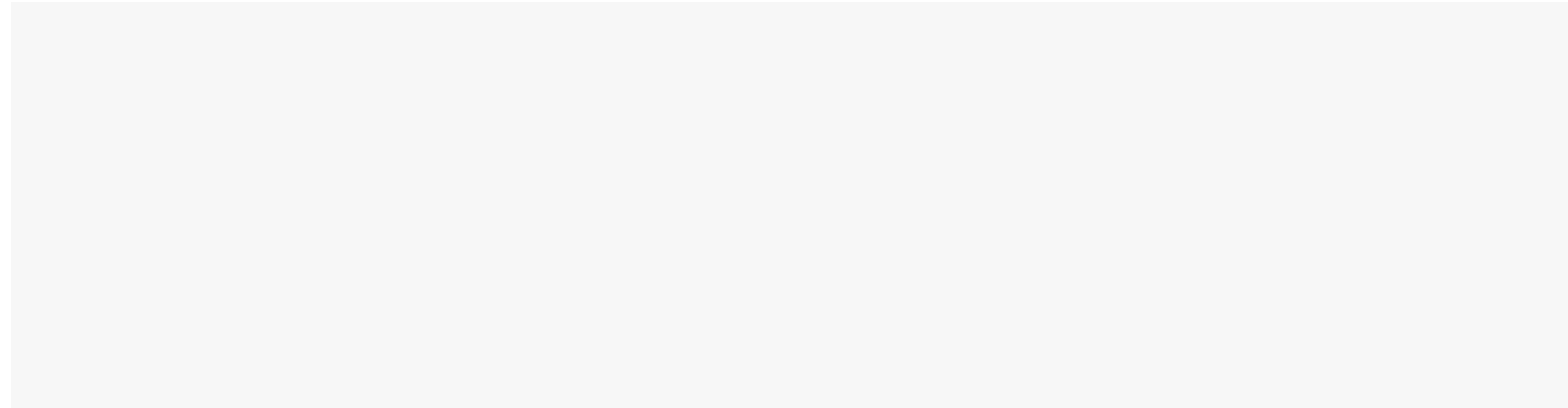
Jacob Scott Goodwin, 23, who wore a military tactical helmet and brandished a large shield during the Aug. 12 attack

against DeAndre Harris, was convicted by a jury of nine women and three men.

The jury recommended a sentence of 10 years, with the option of suspending some of the time, and a \$20,000 fine. The presiding judge, Richard E. Moore, will set the sentence on Aug. 23. When the court clerk read the jury’s recommendation, Goodwin’s mother let out a loud gasp.

Her son had testified that he “was terrified” and was trying to protect himself during the confrontation.

The assault on Harris, 20, a former special education instructional assistant, was so ferocious that he suffered a spinal injury, a broken arm and head lacerations that required eight staples.



Online footage of the beating has been viewed online tens of thousands of times and attracted a group of online sleuths, led by [Black Lives Matter activist Shaun King](#). They tracked down the alleged perpetrators’ identities, including that of Goodwin, who lives in Ward, Ark. [Goodwin was arrested](#) about two months after the rally.

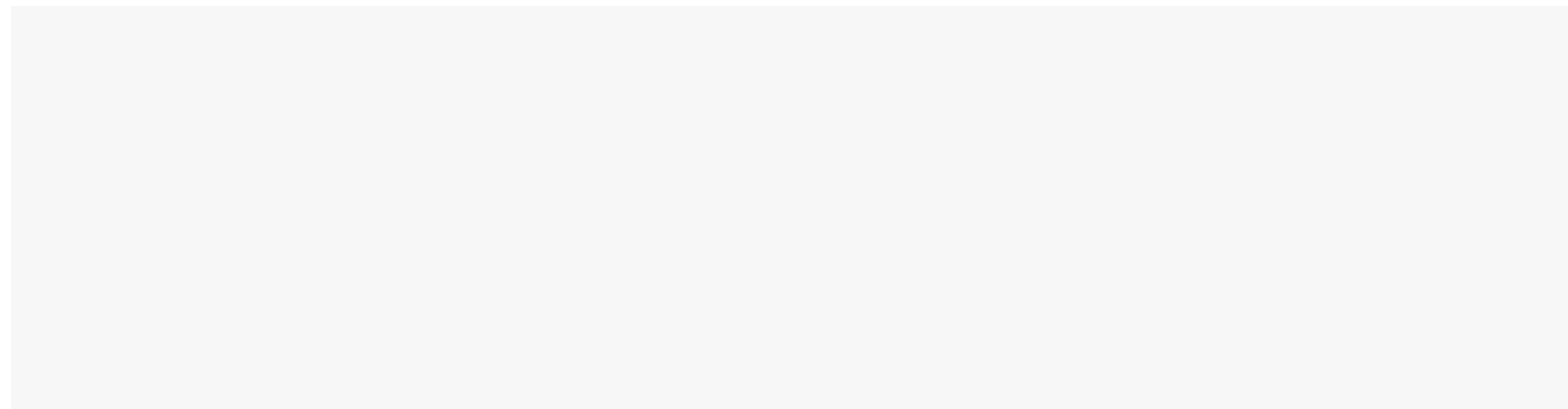
Goodwin’s attorney, Elmer Woodard, argued that Harris, then working as a YMCA camp counselor, came to pick a fight and that his client was just trying to defend himself.

“[Goodwin] came to exercise free speech. Mr. Harris went to abuse free speech — not to exercise it, but abuse it,” Woodward said in his opening statement.

He said it was Harris who went after Goodwin.

“
Jacob Scott Goodwin, of Ward, Ark., after his arrest. (Lonoke County Sheriff’s Office)

But Nina-Alice Antony, an assistant commonwealth’s attorney, said it was Goodwin who wanted to square off.



“He was outfitted for battle,” she told the jury. “He’s got large goggles, boots. He’s got a full body shield.”

The attack inside the Market Street parking garage, next to the Charlottesville Police Department, was one of several disturbing acts of violence during the rally, which was held to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee from a city park. A self-professed neo-Nazi is alleged to have rammed his Dodge Charger into a crowd of people that day, killing 32-year-old counterprotester [Heather D. Heyer, a paralegal](#).

Videos of the parking garage attack on Harris — and of its preceding moments — have been scrutinized frame by frame by Harris’s defenders and white nationalists, each side debating whether Harris was a victim or an instigator.

Harris was acquitted in March of misdemeanor assault and battery against one of the white supremacists involved in the confrontation.

[\[Black man beaten in Charlottesville found not guilty of assaulting white supremacist\]](#)

Nevertheless, much of Goodwin’s trial centered on whether Harris sparked the fight himself by striking a prominent white nationalist in the head with a flashlight.

Just before Harris ran into the garage shortly after 11 a.m. that day, he was standing at its entrance. He saw a fellow counterprotester being speared in the abdomen with a flagpole by Harold Crews, the North Carolina state chairman of the white-nationalist group League of the South. To protect his friend, Harris swung a flashlight, trying to knock the flagpole away.

Seconds after the fight with Crews, Harris rushed inside the parking garage, where he was pummeled.

When Goodwin took the stand, he told the jury he’d seen Harris assault Crews and then saw Harris charging toward him.

“I thought he was a hostile. . . . To be honest, I was terrified,” Goodwin said, adding that he thought, “I’d probably perish or be sent to the hospital and be terribly hurt.”

He said he engaged in self-defense and felt he had only one choice, which was to kick Harris four times while Harris was falling down on the garage floor and scrambling to get back up multiple times.

“I was trying to neutralize a threat,” Goodwin said.

Neither the prosecutors nor the defense attorney questioned Goodwin about his affiliation with any white-supremacist groups. Last month, in an [NBC documentary](#) featuring interviews with Goodwin and his parents, he said he is a member of a group called the Arkansas ShieldWall Network and that he advocates “white civil rights.”

At the rally, Goodwin wore two pins, one bearing the number 88, a code for “Heil Hitler,” and a second with the logo of the Traditionalist Worker Party, a white-nationalist group.

During closing arguments, Goodwin’s lawyer suddenly raised the issue. “They want you to convict this man because he’s white, and DeAndre is a black man,” Woodward told the jury, which included two African Americans.

The comment drew an objection from Antony, who told the judge she deliberately avoided making the case about race.

In her closing arguments, Antony showed the jury a photo of Goodwin dressed in a helmet and goggles and reminded them he was clasp ing a large plastic shield.

She told jurors that they had to ask themselves whether it was “reasonable” for Goodwin to be scared.

“Does Jacob Goodwin see someone over there and go help? Or does he outfit himself for battle and run in to do battle?” she asked jurors.

Antony argued that Goodwin’s kicks to Harris’s backside, rib cage and stomach could have killed, maimed or disabled Harris, elements necessary for the malicious-wounding charge.

But Woodard said Harris’s major injuries involved his head and that the kicks didn’t amount to malicious wounding or even assault and battery.

The jury watched multiple videos of the attack from different vantage points showing Goodwin hitting Harris with a

shield and kicking him while he was on the ground. Other men join in, hitting Harris with a board and a large pole. When Harris managed to get up, they yelled obscenities at him, telling him, “Get out!”

Harris, who testified and then sat in the courtroom listening to the arguments, looked distraught and at one point asked the prosecutor for a tissue while in the witness seat.

Jurors and Judge Moore flashed exasperated and exhausted faces when Woodard grilled Harris about whether he told an FBI agent that he’d been unconscious during the attack.

“You have no recollection of the events,” Woodard said to Harris, trying to persuade jurors he was not a reliable witness.

For dramatic effect, Woodard also made the jurors pass around a large black Maglite flashlight — similar to the one Harris had used to knock away Crews’s flagpole.

“Are you running into the garage to fight or run away?” Woodard asked.

“I’m running away,” Harris said flatly.

Woodard told Harris that he seemed “perfectly fine” while writhing on the parking garage floor.

“I had just fallen down, bumped into someone and been Maced,” Harris replied. “Dude, I’m not perfectly fine.”

Three other men have been also been arrested in connection to the attack on charges including felonious assault to malicious wounding: Alex Michael Ramos of Georgia, whose trial began Wednesday; and Daniel Borden of Ohio and Tyler Watkins Davis of Florida, who face trials this summer.

After Goodwin was convicted of malicious wounding, he faced a maximum prison sentence of 20 years. Before jurors deliberated on their sentencing recommendation, Joseph Platania, Charlottesville’s commonwealth’s attorney, told them that the attack “was a serious event” and that their recommendation “must reflect that” for one major reason:

“As we sit here,” he said, “Jacob Goodwin has yet to express any regret for his actions that day.”

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